

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 696 without my signature, as it provides an opportunity for increased fraud and abuse without guaranteeing increased participation in the program as intended by the legislation.

Throughout my term, I have supported efforts to increase participation in the food stamp program, such as offering food stamps to families leaving welfare to work and improved outreach and program simplification efforts. California has taken steps to ensure fingerprinting requirements do not significantly reduce participation by providing portable finger imaging devices to counties to make it more convenient for individuals to sign up. These efforts, in combination with program simplification and outreach activities, are helping to increase enrollment of eligible families.

The Statewide Fingerprint Imaging System (SFIS) prevents fraud by discouraging applicants from illegally obtaining duplicate benefits. Our first responsibility to taxpayers is to take necessary steps to prevent fraud and abuse in public programs, which is why I cannot support this bill's elimination of the SFIS.

For these reasons, I am returning AB 696 without my signature.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger